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TWO BRIEF DISCOURSES:

One concerning

Infant-Baptism;

And the other concerning the

CHILDREN OF HOLY PARENTS.

By the late Reverend
Mr. *NATHANAEL TAYLOR.*

LONDON:
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The PUBLISHER To the READER.

THere is no need of saying any Thing in commendation of the following Discourses, which have already been Publish'd, with several Sermons of the same Author; and have met with general and deserved Acceptance, and are now Reprinted by themselves for the Benefit of younger Persons, and for a more diffusive Usefulness.

The great degeneracy of the present Age, both in Principle and Practice, particularly among too many of the descendants of Holy Parents; maketh it needful to use all Endeavours possible to reclaim them, and to preserve others from following their evil Example: To which happy end these Discourses seem peculiarly adapted.

For it may be the great Ignorance or Forgetfulness of many concerning the Covenant Privileges, and Obligations they were by their Baptism early invested in and brought under; and their careless if not Prophane neglect to renew their Covenant when they

Consideration I.

No Man pretends, that 'tis written in *so many Words* in the Scripture, that the Infants of Believers are to be Baptiz'd. All that we say in the Case is this, *viz.* We can prove by *just Consequence* from the Scriptures, that 'tis the Mind and Will of Christ, that their Infants should be Baptized. And this we think to be sufficient for these Two Reasons.

Reason 1. Because Christ himself thought this to be *sufficient*, for the Proof of a Matter of greater Moment than *Infant-Baptism*; viz. A Fundamental Article of Faith, the *Resurrection* of the just and unjust; which as you will find in *Mat.* 21. 31, 32. he doth not prove against the *Sadduces* who denied it, by producing any Text of Scripture, wherein it was written in *so many Words* or *Syllables*, that there shall be a *Resurrection:* He goes another way to work. He proves it *by Consequence* from that Scripture, *Exod.* 3. 6. *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* How many *Consequences* are necessary, to prove the Resurrection of all Men from these Words? *viz.* (1.) That the *Souls* of *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, are yet in Being; because he does not say, I *was*, but I *am* their God. (2.) That this Expression of being *their God*, doth imply, his being engaged to manifest himself some time or other, to be their *Benefactor* in an Eminent Manner; that he will do something for them, far better than for any other Men. (3.) That he did not fully manifest himself to be so very great a Benefactor to them, while they were in this World. As to Temporal Blessings many others exceeded them; *Pharoah* for Instance. All that he did for them, fell vastly short of what that *Big* Expression, *I am their* God, doth import. (4.) That therefore he will fill

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it up in another state, which is yet to come. (5.) That in order thereunto, they shall rise from the dead, that they may be compleatly happy in Body and Soul. For he is a God not of a *Piece* only, but of their *whole* Persons; and therefore their Whole Man, Body as well as Soul, shall be made exceedingly happy. (6.) If *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* rise again; so shall other Men, to whom also the Most High is peculiarly related as their God. (7.) If the Righteous rise again, so shall the *Wicked*. And therefore there shall be a Resurrection of the just and unjust.

All these Consequences must be drawn, to make good our Saviour's Proof of a *Fundamental* Article of Faith. We don't need so long a *Train* of Consequences to prove the Lawfulness aud Duty of Baptizing our Infants (as you shall see by and by) though if we did, we have the Warrant of our Saviour's Example, who took this Method for Establishing a Point of much greater Concern.

Reason 2. Our Adversaries themselves do the same, when they *Oppose* Infant-Baptism; as we do, when we contend for it. They don't pretend to bring any place of Scripture, wherein 'tis written in just so many *Words and Syllables*, that Infants are *not* to be Baptized: But they endeavour to prove it *by Consequence*: Or else there could be no Arguing or Dispute about the matter. If they argue from Consequences *against* Infant-Baptism; we must not be blamed for doing the same *for* it. The *Method* and Way of Proceeding is the same on Their Side and Ours. This may suffice for the *First Consideration*. I proceed to

Consideration II.

The turning Point of this Controversie lies here, *viz.* Are our Infants within the Covenant, are they

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the visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom, Yea, or No? And I beseech you to take *special Notice* of this; whether we are not able to make good these Two Things.

1. That our Infants are within the Covenant, are visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom. And,

2. That IF they are, then they have a Right to Baptism.

1. That our Infants are within the Covenant, and are the Visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom. That the Infants of Believers were so of Old, is not denied. That those were Privileges cannot be question'd. None has ever yet produced any Scripture to prove, that they are repealed. Yea, on the contrary, there are many Passages in the New Testament; whence it will appear, that these Ancient Privileges are continued to Us and Ours.

To name a Few,

Luke 18. 15, 16. *They brought unto him* Infants, *that he would touch them: But when his Disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, suffer* Little Children *to come unto me, and forbid them not: For of such is the Kingdom of God.* By the *Kingdom of God*, must be meant one of these two Things. Either.

(1.) The Gospel-Church: In which Sense, that Expression is often to be taken. Or,

(2.) The Future State of Glory.

Now let any take which of these two he pleases; if the *First*, viz. *The Gospel-Church*; then we have what we are pleading for, Infants belong to the Gospel-Church.

If the *Second*, viz. *The Future State of Glory*; thence it will follow, that our Infants are within

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the Covenant, and belong to the Church and Kingdom of Christ here on Earth; for else they can't enter into Heaven. Had it been quite contrary to this; had it been written, that Christ was very *angry* with those, who *brought* little Children to him; and had he said, *Suffer them not to be brought unto me; for of such the Kingdom of Heaven is not:* I suppose, the *Anti pædo-baptists* would have made great Improvement of it.

If our Infants are saved, it must be by some Covenant: If by some Covenant, it must be by the Covenant of Grace. (For by the Covenant of Works, all Flesh is condemned.) They can't be saved by the Covenant of Grace, if they are not within it; if it don't reach and extend to 'em.

If Infants dying in their Infancy are sav'd; they must belong to Christ's Church which is his Body. For he is the Head, and actually a Saviour to none, but those who belong to him; who are his Members and Parts of his Body.

If they are not Members of Christ's Kingdom, then they are Members of the Devil's Kingdom. For the whole World is divided between these two. And can any who are the Members of the Devil's Kingdom, so living, and so dying, be saved?

Again, That our Infants are within the Covenant, and Visible Members of Christ's Church and Kingdom; will appear from *Rom.* 11. 17. where the Apostle treating of the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles*; has these remarkable Words: *If some of the Branches were broken off, (i. e.* That part of the *Jewish* Church who rejected Christ, were Unchurch'd) *And thou (* who wast a *Gentile*) *being a Wild Olive, wert grafted in among them*; (*viz.* The believing *Jews*, who

still

ſtill retained their Ancient ſtanding in the Church, and thou art added to 'em) *and with them, partakeſt of the Root and Fatneſs of the Olive-Tree.*

And then *ver.* 20. *Becauſe of Unbelief they were broken off*; who are called *ver.* 21. *The Natural Branches.* And *ver.* 24. 'tis ſaid of them, that upon their Converſion, they ſhall again *be graffed into their own Olive-Tree.* Now the great Enquiry here will be, what the Apoſtle means by the *Olive-Tree.*

They who oppoſe Infant-Baptiſm ſay, hereby is meant the *Inviſible Church.* Now the *Inviſible Church* is the Company of the Elect, that have been, are, or ſhall be ſanctified and finally ſaved.

On the contrary We ſay, by the *Olive-Tree* is meant the *Viſible Church.* Now the *Viſible Church* is a Company of People, who profeſs the True Religion; ſome whereof do it in Sincerity, but others of 'em are not ſincere in the Profeſſion of it.

And that by the *Olive-Tree* is meant, not the *Inviſible*, but the *Viſible Church* will appear: Becauſe,

The Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch an *Olive-Tree*, whereof the *Jews* were *Natural* Branches. Now no
Ver. 21. Man is by *Nature* (but by meer *Grace*) a Member of the *Inviſible* Church.

And the Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch an *Olive-Tree*, whence ſome of the Branches were *broken*
Ver. 20. *off*: Now no Man is broken off from the *Inviſible* Church: The *Election of God ſhall obtain*, Rom. 11. 7. The *purpoſe of God according to Election ſhall ſtand*, Rom. 9. 11. All ſuch ſhall be finally ſaved.

Again

Again, The Apostle speaks of such an *Olive-Tree*, from which, the Generality of the *Jews* were broken off: Now no Man will say, that the Generality of the *Jewish* Nation in our Saviour's Days, were Members of the *Invisible* Church, *i. e.* were real Saints or Regenerate Persons.

These Considerations shew, that by the *Olive-Tree* is meant the Visible Church.

Now do but Observe the Arguments drawn hence, for proving our Infants being within the Covenant, and Visible Members of the Church, *viz.*

First, The Apostle saith, only that *some* of the Branches, *i. e.* of *Jews* were broken off; and that it was for *Unbelief*. The Believing *Jews* therefore were not broken off, but retained their Ancient Standing in the Church. And so did their Infants. For if their Infants were broken off, it must be for *Unbelief*; which is the only cause assigned by the Apostle. If they were broken off for Unbelief, it must be for their own Unbelief; or, for that of their *Parents*. For their *own* Unbelief it could not be, because by reason of their tender Age, they were not capable of committing the Sin of Rejecting Jesus Christ. For their *Parents* Unbelief it could not be, because we speak only of the Children of such *Jews*, whose Parents did believe on Christ; when he was Preached to them. *Ver.* 17. *Ver.* 20.

Now if the Infants of the believing *Jews*, were continued Members of the Christian Church; our Infants are Members of it too. For there is no Difference under the Gospel, between *Jew* and *Gentile*.

Secondly, We Gentiles *are grafted in among* the Natural Branches, and *with them partake of the Root and Fatness of the Olive-Tree:* i. e. Believers under the

the New Testament, do as amply and fully partake of Covenant Blessings and Privileges, as Believers under the Old Testament did; of which this was one very valuable One, that their Children were Members of the Visible Church, were within the Covenant; the Most High promised (and a great Promise it is) *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*, Gen. 17. 7.

Thirdly, The *Jews* upon their Conversion, shall be *graffed in* again *into their own Olive-Tree*. How can that be, if their Church-state then, shall be so very different from what it formerly was; their Children being then to be left out, who were formerly taken in?

In short, the unbelieving *Jews* and their Children were broken off; when the *Jews* shall be Converted, they and their Children shall be taken in again. Believing *Jews* and their Children kept their Ancient Standing; and Believing *Gentiles* and their Children are taken in among them; share in the Privileges which the one are continued in, and which the other lost; *i. e.* They and their Children are Church-Members, and within the Covenant.

Which is further proved from that known Passage, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. *Else were your Children unclean, but now are they Holy*. Which can't be understood of a Holiness by real *Regeneration*, or the Infusion of Gracious Principles. Alas! Too many Children, that are descended from Pious Parents, give plain Evidence that they are not Born of God. Nor can it be meant of *Matrimonial Holiness*, as the Opposers of Infant-Baptism speak; and so they make this to be the Sense of the Place; *viz. Else were your Children unclean*; *i. e.* say they, they were *Bastards*: But now are they Holy; *i. e.* say they, are *Lawfully begotten*.

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This Exposition can't be right; for this would be to make the Apostle say, that if at least One of the Parents be not a Christian, then all the Children are Bastards: Which is not true. For Marriage is Honourable among *ALL*, Heathens as well as Christians. And if the Parents are Married, whether they be Believers or no, their Children are Legitimate, and can't be said to be *basely* born. It must therefore be meant of a Federal or Covenant-Holiness. *Heb.* 13.14.

These are some (and but a few) of the Arguments our Divines produce. But then Observe what 'tis they are brought for; Not to prove *Immediately*, that Infants are to be *Baptized*. These Arguments *Immediately* and *Directly* prove no more than this, that our Infants are *within the Covenant*; Holy by a *Covenant-Holiness*, as the whole Nation of the *Jews* were; separated to be the Visible People of God, Subjects of his Kingdom, Members of his House and Family. Now this being proved in the *First Place*, Hence our Divines argue by just Consequence in the

Second Place, That IF our Infants are thus within the Covenant, and are Visible Members of Christ's Church and Kingdom; (which hath been proved) That,

Hence it follows, they have a Right to Baptism.

Circumcision, while it was the Initiating Sign of the Covenant, was *for that Reason* applied to Infants. Now Baptism doth succeed in the room of Circumcision, and should be applied to our Infants, if they are within the Covenant (as it hath been proved they are.) *Colos.* 2. 11, 12.

Go and Teach, (or rather, as the Word by the consent of all Parties doth signifie, and should be Translated) Go and *Disciple* all Nations, Baptizing them, *&c. Mat.* 28. 19. If our Infants are *Disciples*, they must thereupon be *Baptized*.

If they are Christ's Soldiers, they must by this Ordinance be listed under him as their Captain. If they are his Subjects, they must be declared to be such by Baptism, which is the External distinguishing Badge between his Subjects, and those who are not so. *Acts* 2. 38, 39. *Be baptized every one of you: For the Promise is to you and to your Children.* The Parents are required to be Baptized for this Reason *because the Promise is to them*; but the Promise reaches to the *children* too; and therefore *they* also are to be Baptized. And 'tis Observable, the Apostle don't say the Promise *WAS*, but the Promise *IS* to you and to your Children. So much for that *Second Consideration*, that the *Turning-Point* of this Controversie lies here, *viz.* Are our Infants within the Covenant, are they the Visible Members of Christ's Church or Kingdom; Yea, or No?

Be sure you mind and consider this.

Consideration III.

Distinguish between a Nation that never had the Gospel Preached to 'em, having always been Heathens; and a Nation to whom the Gospel hath for many Ages been Preached, the Inhabitants having for several Generations been professed Christians.

Between a People who have never yet owned Christ; and a People that have owned him. In the former case (which was the case of those to whom the Apostles first Preached) *We* would exhort Persons to Repent and Believe, and upon their Profession of both these, we would Baptize them. But then we would also Baptize their Infants. Requiring this Profession of the Parents before Baptism, doth not prove that *WE* would not Baptize their Infants. Therefore neither did the Apostles requiring this Profession, prove *They* were against Infant-Baptism.

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They Preach'd to the *Jews*, who had not yet owned Christ; and to *Heathens*, who had not heard of him before; and to Persons grown up; and therefore we read of Believing put before Baptizing. But Christ hath been known, owned and professed in *England* for many Ages. Our Parents before we had a Being were Disciples, and We were *Born Disciples by the Covenant*, and so had a Right to the Seal of that Covenant which is Holy Baptism; *without any fore-going Teaching*. The Time *When*, the Manner *How*, we come to be Disciples, is not material: Whether by the Fore-going Teaching of a Minister, or by God's special and peculiar Vouchsafement. *Ananias* finding *Paul* a *Disciple*, he Baptized him, tho' no Man had by *Teaching* made him so.

In *Lev.* 25, 41, 42. God calls Children his *Servants*. If Children are God's *Servants*, though for the present, they can't do any *Work*; why may they not be *Disciples*; though for the present they can't learn any *Lesson*?

Now this Work of *Discipling* the Infants of Professed Christians being done to our Hands, we treat them as Disciples, and lay a further Engagement on them to be such; first by *Baptizing* them; and afterwards as they grow up, and are capable of it, by *Teaching* them: And so we keep closer to the Commission in *Mat.* 28. 19. than they who oppose Infant-Baptism; for we observe the very *Order* of the Words, which they do not.

Consideration IV.

The other Objections against *Infant-Baptism* have no Weight with them, because of one of these Two Faults in 'em. Either,

(1.) They would have held as well against *Infant-Circumcision*.

Or else,

(2.) They will as well hold against *Infant's-Salvation.*

(1.) They would have held as well against *Infant-Circumcision.* Such as these.

Why do you Baptize Infants, *They don't know what's done to them?*

To which 'tis replied, our Infants when they are Baptized, are not more ignorant what's done to them, than the Infants of the *Jews* were, when they were Circumcised.

Again, say they, Baptism is the Sign and Seal of the Covenant; why do you Baptize *Infants who can't understand the Covenant, much less consent to it?*

To which 'tis replied, Circumcision was the Sign and Seal of the Covenant also; and the *Jewish* Children could no more understand or consent to the Covenant than Ours; and yet they were Circumcised; and our Children may be Baptized for any thing in this Objection. Rom. 4. 11.

Not to add, that the Consent of the Parent goes for that of the Infant. How often do Men in their Leases and Covenants, bind their Children, who neither do know, nor are capable at that time of knowing any thing of the Matter? In *Deut.* 29. 10, 11, 12. Their *Little* Ones are entred into Covenant with God.

Again, say they, the End of Baptism is, that Gospel-Duties, Privileges and Mysteries, might be represented by that Figure to the Eye, *viz.* Dying to Sin, and rising to Newness of Obedience; 'tis a Sign of Repentance, and Regeneration, and Faith. Why then do you Baptize *Infants, who can't understand the meaning of that Sign, or what is represented by Baptizing? And give no Proofs of their Repentance, or Regeneration, or Faith?*

To

To this 'tis replied, that Circumcision represented Regeneration, Mortification and Purity of Heart (whence Sanctification is set forth by Circumcising the Heart.) And the *Jewish* Infants did no more understand, what was signified and represented by Circumcision, than our Infants, do what is represented by Baptism; and gave no more Proofs of Mortification and Regeneration than our Infants do; yet the *Jews* Infants were on other Accounts Circumcised, and so may ours be Baptized for all that.

Though Baptism be not actually a *Teaching* Sign for the present to our Infants, no more than Circumcision was to the Infants of the *Jews*; yet Baptism is at present a *Distinguishing* Sign, and an *Engaging* One; whereby they are distinguish'd from the Children of Heathens, and obliged to the Duties of the Covenant; and may be of great Use to them, when they come to Years of Understanding. As Circumcision was a Distinguishing and Engaging Sign to the Infants of the *Jews*; and of great Service to them when they were grown up.

(2.) Other Objections against Infant-Baptism, if they have not this Fault, that they would as well hold against Infant-Circumcision, they have another as bad and worse; *viz.* They would as well hold against *Infants-Salvation.* Take for Instance that Objection, about which so great a Noise is made; *viz.* 'Tis written; *He that believeth and is baptized*, Mark 16. 16. Now say they, *Infants can't believe*; therefore they ought not to be *Baptized.*

To this 'tis replied, read the Verse out, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Now if there be any thing in their Arguing, Infants can't believe, and therefore they should not be Baptized; it would as well follow, Infants can't *Believe, and therefore they shall not be saved.*

A DISCOURSE

Concerning the Children of Holy Parents.

CHAP. I.

The Children of Holy Parents receive Temporal Bleſſings for their ſakes, and ſtand faireſt for Spiritual ones. The latter open'd in Six Things.

THAT 'tis a very great and valuable Privilege to be Born of Holy Parents, will appear from theſe Two Conſiderations.

I. God frequently beſtows many Temporal Bleſſings on them for their Father's ſakes.

II. They ſtand faireſt for Spiritual and Eternal ones.

I. God frequently beſtows many Temporal Bleſſings on them for their Father's ſakes.

The Curſe of God, like the *Air of a Peſtilence*, enters inviſibly into the Families of the Wicked: And the Bleſſing of God breaks in like the *Light of Heaven*, ſilently and without noiſe, on the Habitation of the Juſt. He hath threatned that he will viſit the Iniquities of the Fathers on their Children to the third and fourth Generation; but he hath more amply promiſed Mercy to thouſands of the Generations of them that love and fear him. The ſweet and gentle Streams of his Mercy towards the one run a much greater way, ſeveral hundreds of Miles; when the bitter ones of his Wrath reach but three or four at the furtheſt. 'Tis true indeed, both the Threatning and the Promiſe do imply this, that the Children do tread in the Steps

Steps of their Parents; and particularly that the Posterity of Holy Men do so, without which God is not obliged to shew favour to them. But yet however God many times acts according to the highest Laws of Friendship, and shews a great deal of Kindness to the degenerate Off-spring, out of respect to their pious Ancestors from whom they descend. The Blessing of God on the Parents, like the anointing Oyl pour'd out on *Aaron*'s Head, flows down to the very *Skirts* of the Garment, the meanest Member in the Family, yea even to the *uncomely* and *dishonourable parts* of their Body, those wicked Children that are indeed the very *shame* and *nakedness* of their Father. *Ishmael* had cast himself out of the Covenant, and *Abraham* had turn'd him out of his House; but God however doth not wholly cast him out of his care. He takes this *unclean*, as well as *wandring* Bird, that was driven from his Nest, under the Wings of his special Providence, and resolves to multiply him into a great Nation, for this very Reason as he told *Abraham*, because he is thy Seed. For his Servant *David*'s sake he continued the whole Kingdom entire all his days to *Solomon*, tho' he was turned an Idolator, and Idolatry in *Canaan* was no less than High Treason against the Theocracy. Yea on the same account he settles *One* Tribe on *Rehoboam*, tho' a mad young Rebel against God, and a wicked Tyrant over his People. He broke off *Ten* of the Lamps from that *branch of Gold*, but continues *One* of them to him, that so therein his Servant *David* might have a *Light burning always before him*. How often did he take up his *Pen* into his Hand to *blot* the whole Name of *Israel* out of his Book: But when he open'd it in order thereunto, he saw the Names of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in the beginning of it; and for the

Gen. 21. 13.

1 *Kings* 11. 34.

sake

sake of those *Letters of Gold*, that were in the *front* of the first Page, the whole *Volume* was spared, though fill'd with many gross and foul *Erratas*.

II. The Children of Holy Parents stand fairest for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. This I will evince by these Six following Considerations, shewing the many Advantages they have to this end above the Children of others.

1. They have the advantages of a Covenant Relation to God, of being Members of the visible Church, and of having the initiating Seal of the Covenant applied to them in their Infancy. I joyn these together, because like the Links of a Chain they have a mutual Connexion, and take hold one on the other. All three of them did belong to the natural Posterity of *Abraham* till God broke them off; and believing Gentiles are engraffed into the same Olive Tree in their room; and the Grace of the Gospel is not sure narrower, but much larger than it was under the Legal Dispensation. 'Tis the whole Scope and Design of the Apostle throughout the Third Chapter to the *Galatians*, to prove, that the Covenant of *Abraham* is still in force and being; and that *his Blessing* is come upon us. Now this was the Blessing wherewith our Father was blest, and that wherein all his Happiness was summ'd up, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy Seed after thee.* And that there might be no doubt of this matter, he tells us, that the descending Blessing which he means, was that great Promise wherein these Words are, *And to thy Seed.* Now there is no other Promise made to him upon Record wherein those Words are, but that, *I will be a God to thee and thy Seed*, except that other of inheriting the Land of *Canaan*, which no one can imagine to be here meant by the Apostle.

Rom. 11.

Further, that the Privilege of being Members of

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the visible Church of Christ doth still belong to such Children, is evident from the Discourse of the same Apostle in another Epistle, where he treats of the rejection of the *Jews*, and calling of the Gentiles. He tells us, that not all, but only *some* of the *Jews* were broken off from the visible Church: And they were broken off meerly on the account of their positive unbelief or rejection of Christ. Consequently the Infants of the believing *Jews* were not broken off. For if they were so, it must be either for their *own* unbelief, a (Sin which by reason of their Age, they are not capable of being guilty of) or it must be for their *Parents unbelief*, which could not be, because we do suppose them to have been Believers. Their Children therefore did keep their ancient standing; now in Christ there is neither *Jew* nor *Gentile*; the natural Posterity of Believers, whether of the Circumcision or Uncircumcision stand on even ground. *Rom.* 11. *v.* 17.

Again; That Church-state which the unbelieving *Jews* were broken off from, they shall on their Conversion, be restored to afresh: For then they shall be graffed into their own Olive Tree. Now in the Judgment of our Adversaries themselves, it would not be their OWN, but ANOTHER Olive Tree, and ANOTHER Church of a quite *differing* Constitution, if their Infants were not included as Members of it. And yet *v.* 24.

Again, Believing *Gentiles* are graffed into the SAME Olive Tree, or the SAME Church state wherein the believing *Jews* did remain, and from which the others were broken off; for (*v.* 17. *some of the Branches were broken off, and thou being a wild Olive Tree wert graffed in AMONG them, and WITH them partakest of the Root and fatness of the Olive Tree.*) And therefore into such a Church as the natural Children of Holy Men are included in as Members of it.

Fur-

Further, That the Privilege of a Baptismal Dedication unto God doth belong to them, as it naturally follows from the Two foregoing Particulars; so it will further appear from those known Words that have been often urged to this purpose, *Thou shalt keep my Covenant therefore, thou and thy Seed after thee in their Generation*, Gen. 17. 9. This is an universal Command laid on all the Seed of *Abraham*, and consequently reaches believing *Gentiles* under the Gospel; for they are *Abraham*'s Seed. And 'tis infer'd from the Promise of being a God to him and his, as appears from the Word THEREFORE. Consequently if that Promise belong to Holy Men in these Gospel days, (as was before proved it doth) this Duty doth oblige them too. And by the KEEPING of the Covenant we are in part to understand the putting the initiating dedicating Sign of the Covenant, for the time being, whatsoever it should be, will appear hence, because the NOT putting of that Sign upon their Infants is
v. 14. called a BREAKING of the Covenant. If the not applying that Sign to their Children be in the judgment of God himself a breaking of the Covenant, then the applying it is in part a keeping of it. And 'tis observable, that this is a General Command, distinct from that Particular one of Circumcision, which comes after it in the following Verse. 'Tis, I say, a General Command, enjoining the putting the Sign and Seal of the Covenant on Infants whatever it should be, which once was Circumcision, but now is Holy Baptism. So that here is an express Command to all the Seed of *Abraham* (and believing *Gentiles* are his Seed) for the Baptizing their Infants; tho' not in the particular term of *Baptism*, yet under this general Notion of the *token* of the Covenant, and keeping of it.

Now all these three things are very considerable ad-

advantages and helps to such Children. For if they stand in a *Covenant Relation* to God, if they are *Members of the Visible Church*, and have the *Sign and Seal of the Covenant* on them, then they are a People *nigh* unto God; whereas others are *afar off*. Their very Names are in the Bond. They are parts of that Society to which the Promises are made; Members of that Body whereof Christ is the Head and Saviour; have a special Interest in the Prayers of all God's People, who tho' they intercede for all the World, yet do so in a particular manner for those that belong to the same Society with themselves; and they are under the special providential Care of Christ, who is the Lord and Ruler of the World indeed, but the Head over all Things to his Church. Hereby God's Right to us is signified; we are in the beginning of our days pre-engaged to him; his Mark is upon us, we are his Sons and his Daughters; he hath a special Interest in us; we are not unclean, but federally holy to God. Such Children are born in and belong to those Houses, to whom Salvation in an especial manner doth belong. For so said Christ to *Zacheus*, *This day is Salvation come to thy House*, Luke 19. 9. because he the Master of it was a Child of *Abraham*. And saith St. *Paul* to the Jaylor, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy House*, Acts 16. 31. Implying, that some special Privilege hereby would redound to his House, *i. e.* his Children, above what the Children of his Neighbours did enjoy.

Ezek. 16; 1 *Cor.* 7; 14.

And as a Sense of all this hath a natural tendency in it to make deep and awful Impressions on our Minds while we are young, and as we grow up; to draw forth our love to God and Christ; to increase our confidence in them; to engage us to walk obedi-

ently

ently before them that have shewn such tender Mercies towards us in our tender Years, when we were not capable of thinking of them, much less of performing any actual Service to them; and furnish us with stronger Pleas to urge them withal in Prayer for renewing Grace than the Children of others can make use of: So it lays a mighty and powerful Obligation on Religious Parents to train us up for God by a holy Education, which is the

2*d*. Advantage of such Children. And a Religious Education is certainly a very great one. You have been trained up in Knowledge, others in Ignorance. You have had good Examples, and they have had very bad ones. You have from your Child-hood been nurs'd up in a good Opinion of the truths and ways of God; they have had wicked Prejudices against both instilled into them betimes, and riveted in them by insensible degrees; and neither of these are easily shaken off. You have ('tis to be presumed) many seasonable Corrections, Counsels, Admonitions, Exhortations and Prayers which they have wanted. You are kept out of the Road of Temptation, so are not they. You can't sin at so easie a rate; Modesty and natural Conscience, Shame and Fear are powerful restraints on you: Whereas they were bred up as they were born, like a wild Asses Colt, and never had this Bridle put into their Mouths. You are brought to sit under the Means of Grace, and the ministry of the Word, which they are taught to slight, and deride, and turn their Backs upon. And having all these Advantages from a pious Education, hence it follows,

3. Such God usually begins to work on more early, waits on them longer, follows them with more offers of his Grace than he doth others, and don't use to cast them off, till they are wholly desperate.

He

He begins *more Early* with them. Ye are the Children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, saying unto *Abraham*, *In thy seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*, Acts 3. 25. And then it follows *unto you FIRST. God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning you away from your Iniquities.* Our Lord himself in the days of his Flesh, preached not to the *Gentiles*, but to the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*; and forbids his Apostles going to the former when he sent them to the latter. And after his Resurrection, tho' their Hands had been embrued in his Blood, he commissions his Servants to go to them in the *first* place, and they had the refusal of the Gospel. These he calls Children, and counts the others as Dogs; offers Bread to the one, but can hardly be perswaded to afford a few Crumbs to the other. Indeed the Spirit of God is wont to be dealing with the Hearts of such young ones very betimes; working many a good Inclination in them, impressing many a serious Conviction very deep upon them, and notably stiring up their Affections, so that all that know them are apt to conceive very great hopes of them.

And tho' they break away from under the Spirits hand, yet he pursues after them, and lays hold on them again and again; shoots many an Arrow of Conviction after these Birds as they are upon the Wing flying away from him; follows them with many repeated offers of his Grace, many calls of his Gospel, many motions of his Spirit, and many checks of their own Consciences, being most unwilling that these Men should perish, because he would not have the ancient Relation between himself and the Families whence they sprung, broken off: And sometimes when he hath taken up his Axe into his hand, as tho' he would fell them with one blow, and so put an end to the

day of their Lives and Grace both together, immediately he repents of what he thought to have done, lays the fatal Instrument down, and resolves to wait yet another Year or two. The patience of God waited on the *Jews* after their Crucifying of Christ, tho' that heinous sin seem'd to have fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquities, no less than 40 Years, and caused his Gospel to be preached in all their Cities with the expence of the Sweat and Blood of his Messengers, to see whither at last they would hearken to it. And if in all that time they would but have suffer'd themselves to have been gather'd under his Wing they had been safe there, and the Roman Eagles had never seized upon them as their Prey. He could not find in his heart to destroy them, till he was quite tired and worn out, and groan'd under the burden of their Provocations, and could bear no longer with them. Such God is not wont to give over, till there's no hope of doing any good upon them. *Ishmael* was a scoffer, which argues a very vile and depraved temper of Mind, and *Esau* a prophane Person that despised and sold his Birth-right for a trifle, before God cast them off.

Now from hence it follows, as might rationally be expected that,

4*thly*, Saving Grace uses to be bestowed on such more frequently than on the Children of other Men.

I don't say 'tis *always* given to them. *Abraham* had an *Ishmael*; corrupt and *rotten* Fruit that dropt from a *good Tree*.

Nor do I say 'tis always denied to others. Vile *Jeroboam* had an *Abijah*, in whom was some good thing towards God, that sprung from his Loins, like a young *green Tree* sprouting out of a *Stone Wall*. By the former God shews the soveraignty and liberty of his Grace, by the later the Riches, and the mighty power of it.

But

But a little Observation will convince you, that generally Religious Families are the Nurseries of the Churches of Christ, which are upheld chiefly by a supply of new Members drawn from them. Converts come in but slowly, then consider,

5. When others are converted, 'tis for this Reason (among the rest) to fill up the room of those ungodly Children of Holy Parents that would not turn to God, and to provoke them to come in at last. *Abraham* must have a Seed some where; and if the Children of the *Flesh* do degenerate, rather than he shall want, God will raise them up to him out of the very *Stones*. If the Children of Holy Men prove obstinate and rebellious, the Spirit of God departs from them, but then he doth it in such a manner as shews some remains of Affection to them that do so unkindly drive him away. For when he leaves them, he resteth on the Children of ungodly Men, that he may if possible, hereby provoke them to Jealousie by them that were *no People*, when they see their Privileges taken away from them, and given to the most unlikely persons before their Faces. Remarkable is that saying of *Paul* and *Barnabas* to the *Jews*, *It was* necessary *that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you*; *but* seeing ye put it from *you*, *and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting Life*, *Lo*, *we turn to the Gentiles*, Acts 13. 46. The natural Branches run quite wild, and therefore are cut off; and for that reason other Branches are grafted in their room and stead; but 'tis contrary to Nature; because God will do Miracles but that he will have some to bring forth good Fruit. The falling of the *Jews* was the riches of the *Gentiles*, and through it Salvation came unto them: the casting away of them was the reconci-

Rom. 10. 19.

Rom. 11. 11, 12. *v.* 15.

ling of the World; and the *Gentiles* ob-
v. 30. tained Mercy through the *Jews* Unbelief.
And one design of God in all this, and
v. 11. of his Apostle in insisting so much on it,
v. 14. was, to provoke these *Jews* hereby to Jealousie, and to Emulation, that he might save them. *That*, saith he to the believing *Gentiles*, *through your Mercy they also may obtain Mercy*, v. 31. *i. e* By the Grace of God shewed to you in the Conversion of so many of you, they might be stirr'd with a holy Indignation at themselves, seeing the advantage you have gotten of them who did once so far exceed and so much despise you, to embrace Christ and his Gospel, and recover their dear, but now lost Privileges again. And if by these or any other means they are but wrought on at length, then,

6. and Lastly, When such do return, of all Sinners they are the most readily and the most kindly received by God. For of *all the pieces of Silver* that were lost in the Dust and Rubbish of this World, God is most pleased when those are *found* again that had his *Superscription* upon them of old, after they have been missing for a long while.

The Apostle speaking of the calling of the *Gentiles*, that were formerly strangers to the Promises and the future Conversion of the rejected *Jews*, once the Children of the Covenant, *If* (saith he) *thou wert cut out of the Olive Tree which is wild by Nature, and wert graffed contrary to Nature into a good Olive Tree, HOW MUCH MORE shall the natural Branches be graffed in again*? Rom. 11. 24. *i. e.* upon their sincere return unto God, and Faith unfeigned in our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The forementiond Privileges will not avail the wicked Posterity of Holy Men. The Covenant Promises have a double Condition; this sadly broken. God hath not promisd absolutely such effectual Grace as infallibly to prevent it. Hereupon God is at perfect liberty to reject them if he please, without any just Reflection. He doth so as to many of em. They deserve and shall meet with the sorest Condemnation.

IN the former Chapter I have largely shewn the very valuable Privilege of being descended from Holy Parents, and that such as are so, stand fairest upon many accounts of all Men for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. What I have there said on that Argument may fill them all with Hopes; what I am now entring upon may fill them with Fears, *viz.* That all these Privileges will in the issue be of no advantage to them, nor save them from Hell, if when they grow up, they prove workers of Iniquity. I will open this in Six Propositions.

I. The promise of being a God to the Seed of his People (and so all others of that nature) hath a double Condition annexed to it.

1. On the part of the Parents during the Minority of their Children.

2. On the Children's parts when they grow up to Maturity.

1. On the Parent's part during the Minority of their Children. No Parent now can pretend to a better tenure than our Father *Abraham* had, to whom the original Grant was made. Now saith God expressly concerning him, *Gen.* 18. 19. *I know Abraham, that he will command his Children, and his Houshold after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, that*

the Lord may bring upon Abraham the thing which he hath spoken of him. Wherein 'tis necessarily implied, that if *Abraham* did not so do, God would not hold himself obliged to make good his part of the Covenant. And by his commanding of them by a Synechdoche, we are to understand all the Branches of a holy Education, *viz.* Instruction, Exhortation, Prayer, good Example, and godly Discipline. And when the Parent hath thus conscientiously discharged his Duty, there is a Condition,

2. On the Children's part when they are grown up to Maturity. And that is personally to lay hold on the Covenant, consent to the Terms, and walk according to the Tenor of it. For when we are Adult, our Infant-title ceases, unless it be this way continued. Our Parents Will shall no longer go for OURS, when we have the use of our Judgments and Wills, and are capable of a personal Transaction with God for ourselves, if we do not surrender and give up our selves to him, upon his putting in his claim to us. If we will not do so, we turn Apostates; we do in effect abjure and renounce the God of our Fathers, we do reverse that Dedication which they made of us, and by the course of our Lives and Actions say, that now we are come to years, and are capable of judging what they did, we think they did not do well when they devoted us to God in *our* Infancy as far as it was in their power: for we will not be for him, but for another. And so we cut ourselves off from God, to whom they gave us; we upon deliberation cast ourselves out of the Covenant by our own Act and Deed whereinto they entred us, and forfeit all the Blessings and Privileges of it.

Our Parents own Right and Title to the Promise is continued to them upon this Condition, as it was to *Abraham*, provided they *walk before God and be perfect*; other wise he will not continue to be their God.

And

And when we are come to years of Discretion to choose for ourselves, we can't reasonably expect he should continue to be our God, but upon the same Terms. We can't rationally think to have a better Tenure than they under whom we hold. Tenants at second hand can't hope for better Terms, than the original ones under whom they claim. 'Tis enough that when we come to write Men, we be as our Parents. *David* sure understood the Terms of this great Covenant, which was in his dying Hour *all his desire and all his Salvation:* And he expressly tells *Solomon, If thou forsake the God of thy Fathers, he will cast thee off for ever.*

II. This double Condition is notoriously broken by Multitudes. And

1. The Condition on the Parents part is so during the Minority of their Children.

How little care do the generality of them take to season the Hearts of their Children with a saving Knowledge in their tender Years? Many Families even in this our *Goshen* that would be accounted religious ones, are like the Houses of the *Egyptians*, covered with blackness of darkness, and a palpable Ignorance in the things of God, wherein not only their First-born, but all their other Children to lye dead in a spiritual Sense. Where are the Men that command their Children to keep the way of the Lord, and in that respect tread in the Steps of their Father *Abraham*; that give a Charge to their Children to this purpose, both living and dying? Where are the daily Counsels, Admonitions, Instructions and Exhortations, which God expects you should give them when you rise up and when you lye down, in the House and in the Field? What between a negligent Father on the one hand, and a fond foolish Mother on the other hand, godly Family Discipline is almost lost. Men content themselves with a few formal lazy Prayers

for

for them (and I doubt that is more than many of them do too) or with putting up a few Bills to desire the Prayers of the Congregation for them; but in the mean time a holy Education of them is wofully neglected in some one considerable Branch of it, or it may be in all. And when they themselves have Murdered their own Children, they bring them to the Prophets of the Lord to pray them to Life again. 'Tis here as in the Paschal Solemnity of old, the Blood of these Lambs of Christ's Flock is sprinkled, not on the Posts of their Doors, but on the Skirts of the Garments of these unnatural Parents in whose Houses they dwell. But I doubt it will not prove the Lord's Passover to them; God awaken them, that the destroying Angel do not enter in there and slay the wicked Authors of so great a Mischief. And as the Parents are grosly faulty, so

2*dly*, The other Condition on the Children's part, when they are grown up to Maturity, is manifestly broken by multitudes of them. For the proof of this I appeal to the Tears and the Groans of many Holy Parents over their Sons of *Belial*; who may well invert the Proverb of old, and say, *Our Children have eaten sower Grapes, and the Teeth of us their Parents are set on edge.* 'Tis but too plain that thousands of the Children of the Covenant have made themselves the Children of the Devil, for his Works they do, and that openly too. They are like their Father in other things, only they are not as invisible as he is. And tho' I hope they are not so numerous, yet I am sure their Name is *Legion.*

III. God hath no where absolutely promised to bestow such a measure of Grace either on Parents or Children, as infallibly to prevent the breach of either of these Conditions. This I am sure of, because if he had, he would certainly give it; for he is faithful

and

and cannot break his word. The heart of a godly Parent may be right as to the main, and yet he may be too negligent in this part of his Duty; and tho' in time he may reform, it may be too late before he doth it to prevent or retrieve the Mischiefs he hath done hereby to the Soul of his Child. This fatal Negligence of his that draws such a black Train of sad Consequences after it, is not through any defect on God's part, but purely on his own: Not for want of sufficient Grace to discharge this part of his Duty, but of a diligent use and improvement of it. And if Men will not stir up the Grace of God that is in them, they can't charge God with a breach of any Promise he hath made to their Posterity; nor justly blame him if he be as careless of them as they are; for they don't do what he hath commanded them, as a means on their part for the entailing Covenant-blessings upon them. When they grow up they depart from the good old way instead of walking in it. But what's the Reason? They did not train them up in it while they were Children, and direct their steps into it, tho' God engaged to bestow Grace on them on no other terms than these; and tho' this was no more than what they had a power and ability thro' Grace to do; and were often call'd on by his Word, Spirit, Providence and Ministers so to do, yet they would not. Is God now to be blamed for this? No surely. For tho' he hath said, he will Circumcise the Heart of his Servants and their Seed after them; yet he expresly requires, *Deut.* 30. 6, 10. *That they hearken to the Voice of the Lord, and keep his Commandments, and turn to the Lord their God with all their Heart and with all their Soul.*—— Hence it follows,

IV. That God is at perfect liberty to reject and cast them off if he please. For this is the nature of all Covenants, that when one Party doth not perform,

form, but notoriously break the Condition which he stood engaged to, the other Party is discharged, and if he please, may, without any just Reflection, refuse to do what upon that supposition only he obliged himself unto. And surely we will allow to God, what we so reasonably claim to ourselves; *i.e.* to speak in a Modern Phrase, to *abdicate* them that wilfully *break the Original Contract*, and especially if they obstinately persist in so doing. * He can't be charg'd with *Injustice*; for 'tis a righteous thing in him to reject those that in such a manner first of all reject him: Nor with want of *Truth* and *Faithfulness* to his Word; for 'tis but the doing what in such cases he hath told and threatned that he would do. 'Tis only Divine Goodness that can be called in Question.

It would be too great a Diversion to shew that this Attribute doth not oblige God to bestow special, effectual, saving Grace on this or that Man. For *de facto*, 'tis evident he doth not do it to Multitudes. He never design'd to represent himself either in his Word, or his Actions as a Being of meer Grace and Mercy. Divine Goodness, as to its Actings, is under the regulation and conduct of his other Attributes, of Justice, Holiness, and Wisdom; and 'tis for the honour of God that it should be so. He is to be conceived by us not only under the Notion of a very gracious *Benefactor*, but also under that of a Wise, Righteous, Soveraign *Ruler* over *Rational Beings*; whom he governs according to their *Natures*. The Former Notion renders it infinitely decorous for him to bestow

* Remarkable to this purpose are the Words of *Matellus*, *Dij immortales plurimum possunt; sed non plus nobis velle debent quam Parentes. At Parentes, si pergimus errare, suis bonis nos exheredant. Quid ergo nos a Dijs immortalibus divinitus expectemus, nisi errationibus finem faciamus? His demum Deos propitios esse æquum est qui sibi adversarij non sunt.* *A. Gellij noct. Attic.* l. 1. c. 6.

bestow effectual Saving Grace on some, even tho' they have forfeited it and rendred themselves utterly unworthy of it; that he may have some everlasting Monuments of the Riches of his free Love, and some to be a peculiar People to himself, actively glorifying, loving, serving of him, and designedly promoting his Honour and Interest here below in their several Generations: That he may have some dutiful loyal Subjects, and his Son may have a Seed to serve him as a Recompence for his bitter Sufferings. For the honour of the divine Name and Government. But then 'tis fit he should use his own Liberty, and shew his Mercy on whom he will; it being such a marvelous Instance of Bounty as none can justly claim, and all have a thousand ways and times rendered themselves utterly undeserving of it.

But then consider God as a Wise, Righteous, Soveraign *Ruler* over Rational Beings, whom he governs according to their Natures as Free-Agents, so 'tis infinitely decent and becoming of him to use such Providences, Helps, Means internal and external, the calls of his Word, Motions of his Spirit, checks and rebukes of their own Consciences, *&c.* as have a visible aptitude in them to make powerful Impressions upon Creatures of such a Make and Frame, and lead them to Repentance; and then refer it to their *own choice.* But if they will from time to time wickedly, and obstinately, and madly resist the natural, and the mighty force and tendency of these proper Means, their own Consciences, and all impartial standers by will highly justifie God, that he would have purged and saved them, did what lay on him, and what was meet and fit for him to do in order thereunto: But after all they *would* madly undo themselves in despite of him.

Here was all the goodness of a *Governour* shewn

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to them, and that in very high degrees and repeated Instances of it: Yea, even the goodness of a *gracious Benefactor* too, in very great measures, tho' not in that particular height as to bestow effectual Grace upon them, which he was no ways obliged unto; nay, rather was obliged to *deny* it to the *generality* of such Creatures, tho' for the fore-mentioned Reasons he did give it to some few of their number. For as a Rector he is concerned at length, *generally speaking*, to withdraw present, and deny further Favours to those that have so *insufferably* abused them, and recompence them according to their Works.

And of all the Men in the World Divine Goodness is least of all to be Impeached for denying saving effectual Grace to the profligate Children of Holy Men, to whom he hath vouchsafed such peculiar Privileges, mentioned at large in the foregoing Chapter, above what are commonly granted to others; and who yet do so horribly affront and provoke him, *reject the Counsel of God against themselves*, and of all the Sons of Men render and judge themselves most unworthy of any other Instances of the Divine Grace and Bounty. Hereupon,

V. God doth reject and disown them with the greatest Indignation and Scorn. He will not do them so much Honour as to look upon them as related to, or descended from such holy Men. *Not they that are the Children of the Flesh*, i. e. those that are only so, *but the Children of the Promise are counted for the Seed*, Rom. 9. 8. As tho' the ungodly *Israelites* were none of *Abraham*'s Posterity. Such are to him as the Children of the Heathens, yea and those of the vilest of Heathens too. *Ye are all to me as the Children of the Ethiopians, O Children of Israel*; Amos 9. 7. or as the *Arabians*, as some Learned Men think the word signifies: A base and thievish, a bloody and savage Peo-

People, curſed of old in their Progenitors by *Noah*, hated, and deſpiſed, and abhorred of all their Neighbours, as the very dregs and ſcum of Mankind. Nay, yet worſe, God compares them to the people of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. Such filthy Wretches which God's Soul did ſo loath and abominate, that he rained down Fire and Brimſtone from Heaven upon them. *Hear the word of the Lord ye Rulers of* Sodom, *and ye people of* Gomorrah, *Iſa.* 1. 10. They are the wicked Poſterity of *Abraham* that are there ſpoken to. And when we are arrived at *Sodom*, we are on the very brink of Hell; and thence doth Chriſt fetch the Parentage of the wicked *Jews: You ſay you have Abraham to your Father; but I ſay you are of your Father the Devil, for his works you do*, John 8.

Now from all that hath been ſaid it follows,

VI. Laſtly, That ſo far are the wicked Children of Holy Parents from being ſaved becauſe of their Relation to them, that they ſhall receive a ſorer Condemnation than the Children of others. And very good reaſon there is for it. For they ſin againſt all the fore-mention'd various Means, Helps, and Advantages which they enjoy above others.

God is more diſhonoured by them. They tempt Men to think there's no great matter in being viſibly in Covenant with God. They harden Men in their miſtaken Belief, that our Doctrine of Infants Church Memberſhip is the Foundation of, and an Inlet into Ignorance, Looſeneſs and Profaneneſs.

They are greater Scandals to the Men of this World; and a greater Comfort and Encouragement to them in their evil ways.

They contradict the great End and Deſign of God, who expects to have his Church and his Intereſt upheld and propagated by thoſe that are Born to him and bred up for him in Religious Families.

When they prove bad, they are generally the vilest of Men, and therefore shall prove the most forlorn, miserable Creatures in Eternal Torments.

CHAP. III.

An Address proposed to be made to Three sorts of Persons. Two of them, viz. Ministers, young ones especially, of Holy Parents, applied to in this Chapter.

FROM what hath been said in the two foregoing Chapters, I shall take an occasion to address my self to three sorts of Persons.

I. To Ministers.

II. To Holy Parents.

III. To the Children of such.

I. To Ministers. And I beseech them to suffer the word of Exhortation from one that is more conscious to himself, than any other can be of his great unfitness in all respects to be their Monitor.

But a Pipe, tho' made of a very ordinary piece of Wood, or a Trumpet, tho' a very plain and common one, and a thing without Life, may serve to raise the Spirits of a skilful and valiant Soldier, and quicken him to the Battle. The thing that I would humbly stir you up unto by way of remembrance, speaks it self, how little soever I may be capable of saying to it. For 'tis to be imitators of God, and like him to have a special Eye upon and peculiar regard unto the Children of the Covenant in general, and particularly those of them that are the Off-spring of the Members of those several Churches of Christ wherein the Holy Ghost hath already settled any of you, or shall do so for the future.

This seems to me to be the peculiar Province where-

in

in young Ministers are most likely to serve their Master and their Generation. For as for the old Grey-headed Sinners they will be too apt to dispise your Youth. Your Arms are too feeble to make the Sword of the Spirit pierce thro' the thick Scales of the overgrown Leviathans. These bones are not only dead, but have been so for so long a time that they are even dry too. And is it likely you should Prophecy so as to make them live? But yet *Abba Father*, all things are possible unto thee.

As for the aged Believers, the main Work was done on them many years, it may be, ere you were born: They were in Christ a long time before you were in the World. They whose Grey Hairs in the way of righteousness, make them look like Ears of Corn ripe for the Harvest, and even ready to be carried into the Garner, need little cultivating or watering from any Hand.

As for the Children of ungodly Men, you seldom converse with them; and when you do, they will hardly give you the hearing when you offer to speak seriously to them of the things of God. These are a Generation of Vipers, and will be ready to hiss and sting that charitable Hand that doth but touch them, tho' never so gently. Or if you do make any impressions upon them, they are quickly stifled and blotted out again by the Agents of Satan, among whom they live, and converse withal.

But as for those young ones that dwell under the Roof of a holy *Abraham*, and sprang from his Loins, you have more opportunities of dealing with them, and more hopes of prevailing upon them. They are more soft and yielding, more capable of and likely to receive *impressions* from your hands, here therefore may you most rationally expect some Seals of your Ministry. You have in them some little handle to take

hold of, some imperfect knowledge of the Principles of the Oracles of God, which their Parents have been dropping into them; and some good affections which the Spirit sometimes stirs up in them; like a few streaks of Light in the Air before the rising of the Sun, the happy presages of a fair day. You have some little share in their affections and esteem; they have learnt from their Parents to shew some respect even to the meanest of Christ's Embassadors. There are many little Arts whereby you may easily slide and wind and insinuate yourselves into their Affections for their good, and get within 'em. They will be apt it may be to speak more freely to you, when the gravity of an aged Minister will damp and over-awe them. Possibly they may more readily hearken to you, when you speak against youthful Lusts, than they would to elder persons; who they may be apt to think do talk against them because their Age hath mortified them, and made them at once uncapable of remembring the former pleasures of Sense, as well as of tasting them for the future. The Wisdom of God appears in commissionating not only Angels to preach the Gospel to us, but Men like ourselves, subject to the like Passions and Infirmities as we are. And if any little beginings of a good Work appear as the Fruit of what you say to them, their holy Parents under whose Wings they are, will be ready to cherish the vital heat that you have imparted to them; with joyful Hearts will take up the matter where you left it, and carry it on.

'Tis evidently the grand design of the Devil and his Instruments, and which God especially calls you to countermine, to seduce and debauch these. The roaring Lyon that goes about seeking whom to devour, longs for the young Kids and the tender *Lambs* of Christ's Flock as the sweetest Prey that he can fasten upon. God quicken you, and prosper your Endeavours

vours to pluck them out of his Jaw who is swallowing them at this day with open Mouth. Notwithstanding all their Privileges, they will as certainly and more fatally perish than the Children of other Men if an especial care be not taken of them. And where will you employ yourselves, if not among these young and tender Plants, in those Houses that are the *Nurseries* of the Church, whence there is the greatest likelyhood of a supply of fit Members for the Plantations of Christ, when the old Trees are removed? *Our Fathers where are they? Where?* Praising God in Heaven, and their places on Earth shall know them no more. Our ancient Disciples are marching apace after them, wearing away and dropping off one after another. And where, in a few years, shall Christ have a Generation to serve him, if you do not from among these raise up a spiritual Seed to our Elder Brother. If we have not some new ones to come up in their room (and whence can they be so reasonably expected as from such Families?) If our *Burials* exceed the number of our *Births*, we cannot long subsist; but the Churches of Christ which he hath set you to look after, must sink, and in a little while come to nothing.

II. I shall apply my self to Holy Parents, a little to direct and perswade them to take a special care of the Souls of their Children. And,

I. Begin betimes, and continue unwearied in a godly Education of them in all the Branches of it, using all means and helps to make it successful. Study their Tempers and Inclinations, that you may the better manage them. Keep them duly to Family Prayer, and put them upon seeking God apart by themselves. Bring them to the Publick Worship as soon as may be without disturbance to the Assembly. Examine them what they remember of every Sermon they hear, and let them

know you expect an account. When any affecting Passages drop from the Mouth of the Preacher, whet them upon their Minds, and make a particular Application of them to their Souls; This, O my Child, is thy Duty and Danger as well as mine; my eternal Salvation and thine depend on the doing what we have heard this day. Keep them, O keep them from *Evil Company*, infectious *Books*, and places of Temptation and Danger. Maintain your *Authority* over them, and yet don't deal imperiously with them, *provoking them to Wrath.*

But especially let me recommend two Branches of a Holy Education, which I doubt are much neglected, or at least not performed aright.

1. The exercise of a strict Family Discipline in a prudent and pious manner. Indeed it looks like a piece of *Popish Penance* for a Man to Correct his own Child; 'tis to lash *himself*, and scourge his *own Flesh.* But remember the express Command of God, *Chasten thy Son while there is hope, and let not thy Soul spare for his crying.* 'Tis better they should cry a little under your Rod, than roar for want of it for ever in Hell, and be lasht with Scorpions there to Eternity. Only let this be done prudently, seasonably, calmly, soberly, convincing them first of their Fault, and your necessary Duty in chastising of them by some pertinent Scripture, and with Solemn Prayer either before or after, or both, that God would Sanctifie it as his own Ordinance to the good of their Souls.

2. Catechize and instruct them duly both as to Matter and Manner.

As to *Matter.* See that the foundation of Christianity be well inlaid in their Souls.

For 'tis a lewd Age, wherein many whose own Souls are canker'd with Principles of *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, endeavour by slye Insinuations gradually to taint

taint and corrupt first the Minds and then the Manners of the Youth of this City. And it would make a Man's Heart bleed to think how far they have prevail'd on many of them. Tho' they are but *thin Cobwebs* that they weave, yet they have been strong enough to hold many of these little *Insects:* And when once they have entangled them, they never cease instilling their Venome till they have totally poison'd and ruin'd them. 'Tis wonderful to observe how soon some of these Novices have set up for *Doctors* in the Devil's Schools, and seating themselves in the *Chair of the Scorners*, can deride all revealed Religion, arraign and condemn Christ as an Impostor, and besmear him again with their Spittle; Burlesque the Holy Scriptures, and laugh at immaterial Substances and everlasting Flames. And tho' many of them evidently do not understand the Atheistical, Infidel Cavils and Objections they have heard, yet they will be *hammering* at them, and repeat somewhat of them, like an *Eccho* in an empty and hollow place, that reverberates the last words that were spoken, but in such a broken imperfect manner that there is no Sense to be made of them. But above all to run down the MINISTRY, is at once both the easiest and the pleasantest thing of all. And every *dull young Fool* fancies he can be very smart and witty upon them. *Baalam*'s Miracle is repeated every day; There is no *Ass* so stupid but can open his Mouth to rebuke the *madness of a Prophet.* And how can the Servants of Christ do any good upon them, when they are despised in their Eyes; and when the very Topicks whence their Arguments of perswasion are drawn, are not only disbelieved but derided by 'em too.

In short, Atheism, Ungodliness and Debauchery lie at the bottom of all this, and therefore especially fortifie their Minds against them in their young and tender Years. More-

Moreover, give them a clear understanding of their *Native Corruption* wherein they were born; of the nature and necessity of *Regeneration* and the *influences of the Spirit* and *Repentance* towards God, and *Faith* on our Lord Jesus Christ, which are the vital practical fundamentals of the Gospel: The meaning of their *Baptism*, and the *Covenant* of God whereinto you entred them: What *advantages* they have thereby; what *Obligations* and *Encouragements personally to lay hold on the Covenant*, and yield up themselves unto God fully, sincerely and deliberately; and that their Lives and their Souls, and their eternal Salvation, and their *ALL* doth depend on their so doing.

And then as for the *Manner* of your Instruction, let it be frequent, with a becoming *Gravity*, *Seriousness*, and a visible holy *warmth* of Soul; and mingle with your Teaching the most pathetical Exhortations, Counsels, Admonitions, Perswasions and Commands. Not only inform their *Judgments*, but apply yourselves to their *Affections* too. The Ministers of God are fain to study how to reach both these for the Conversion of grown Persons; and so must you as ever you hope to be happy Instruments in the Conversion of your Children: 'Tis as necessary, and more easie to reach their Hearts. Not only ply the Oar, but fill the Sails too, or else these little Vessels will hardly be moved up the Stream and against the Tide. And be sure to add to all the rest a holy Example; there is a Reverence due from you to your Children, as well as from them to you. Do nothing that is unseemly before them, least they learn it of you, and resemble you more in such *Actions* than in any of your *Features*. Worse *Marks* and *Signatures* are hereby made by many Parents on their Children after their Birth, than by some of them *before* it. I must not forget, and hope you will not neither, the offering up daily fervent Prayers to the God of all Grace in their behalf. II.

II. Follow them close when at any time you perceive them under Convictions, or any good Affections stirring in them.

Then are you most likely to succeed, when God and you are workers together.

III. Have a care what Servants you take into your Houses. These will be much with them, and it will lye in their power to do them much good or harm while they are attending on them. As not only the Stars, but even the Planets that move in an inferiour Orb, have either a benign or a malignant Influence on this Earth while they are ministring to it.

IV. Prudently make a visible distinction in the distribution of your worldly Goods among them according to the appearances of serious Religion in them. When once they see by your Carriage towards them, that you are resolv'd to put as few Weapons as well you can, into the Hands of those that are the *Devil's Children* more than *yours*, it may keep them from open wickedness, bring them to a due attendance on the publick Ministry, make them a little thoughtful and considering; and who knows what the blessed Issue of that may be in time? God himself makes Promises and Threatnings about things of this nature to allure Men to Religion: The giving or denying temporal Blessings is one means that he makes use of to prevent Sin and to reclaim Men from it. 'Tis not in itself the *best* and the *strongest* Argument, but it may be the most effectual in some cases and on some Tempers: And a wise Man will use that means which is the most likely to attain his End, not that which abstractedly consider'd is most noble. A wedge of *Gold* is more valuable than a great quantity of *Iron*: But a wise Man that is assaulted by his Enemy, had rather at that time have, and use even a *rusty old Sword*.

V. Prepare them for, and bring them to a full Com-

Communion with some or other of the Churches of Christ. I shall toward the end of this Discourse call upon them to joyn themselves to such Societies. I now mind you to fit and to call upon them to do it. You can't imagine what an Advantage it would be if you did but thoroughly prepare them for, and prevail upon them to come and solemnly and personally to renew their Baptismal Covenant at the Table of our Lord, and put themselves under the inspection, care, prayers of such a Christian Society, and the evangelical Discipline of the Officers thereof. By Parents neglect of so doing that little good thing that was (it may be) in the Hearts of their Children towards the Lord God of *Israel*, withers and decays: They degenerate into an indifferency of Spirit, luke-warmness and carelessness about the things of God and of Religion: And all good Impressions that once were made on them, are so far worn out, that it becomes a very doubtful thing whither they have any thing at all of the Grace of God in their Hearts: Like the Inscription of an old neglected Monument, so batter'd and defac'd that 'tis scarce legible, and 'tis very difficult to pick out what and whose remains are within. To this 'tis owing that so many join themselves to no Church; content themselves with an *Attendance* on the publick Sermons only, with a general *Profession* of Christianity at large; or it may be with a bare *Morality*; and too many drop off wholly into the World, being altogether transform'd into the way and manners, and are totally lost in the Vanities and Corruptions of it: Like dead pieces of Wood, that once were parts of living Trees, falling into some Waters of a petrifying nature, that are thereupon changed into the likeness and hardness of Stones.

VI. Deal very seriously with them when your End is visibly approaching. Let some of your last Breath

be

be spent for God's Glory and the good of their Souls. Tell them your own experiences of the goodness and faithfulness of God; the advantages of an early serious Religion; the vanity and folly of Sin, the happiness of an interest in Christ, and charge them as ever they expect to see God's Face and yours with comfort, diligently to look after it. The words of a dying Man, especially of a *dying Friend or Parent*, enter deep, come with a great weight and authority, and may be remembred by them to very good purposes, after you yourselves are pass'd into the Land of forgetfulness.

The taking a special care of the Souls of their Children in such Instances as these, might be urged with variety of Motives. I will mention but one, and that is a very affecting one, *viz.* the Groans of a godly Parent over a wicked Child. And could we but get near enough, we might hear him venting his Passion in some such words as these; *viz.* 'Oh this ungodly 'Wretch, this Son of *Belial*! He will break my Heart 'sure, and bring down my grey Hairs in sorrow to 'the Grave. I trained him up for God; but he is 'resolved to be for the Devil in despight of God and 'me. When he was an Infant, I remember he was a 'pleasant Child: When he was a tender Plant, I hoped he would one day have flourisht like a Branch 'of Righteousness that the Lord had bless'd. But he 'is now a grieving Brier, and a pricking Thorn in 'my Eyes, my very Heart and Soul. Alas! Woe is 'me miserable Man that I am; that ever Hell should 'be the fuller for me! That from my Loins should 'issue one that is a dishonour to God, and a scandal 'to Religion, the plague and burden of the Earth, 'and a Fire-brand for eternal Burnings. O my Bowels, my Bowels! I am pained at the very Heart; 'Now is my Soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death

'death. Happy is the Womb that never bare, and the 'Breasts that never gave suck. Would to God I had 'been written down Childless in his Book. Was ever 'any sorrow like———

And then the swelling Passion grows too big to be vented by Words: A Floud of Tears gushing out stops the good Man's Speech; and he expresses (as the *Egyptians* in their Hieroglyphicks did, by things not by words) the remainders of his grief in sighs and deep groans, enough to break his own Heart, and the Heart of any Man that doth but hear him.

How sad would it be if this should be your case another day; and how heavy would it lye upon you if your own Conscience should reproach you. All this hath come to pass thro' your own fondness neglect and folly.

CHAP IV.

An Address to the Children of Holy Men in Five Things.

MY Discourse in this Chapter shall, like the Divine Blessing, descend from Holy Parents to their Children. And there are these Five Things I shall propose to them.

I. Seriously bethink yourselves. Consider each of you in particular in how many Instances you have broken with God, and (from what hath been said in the fore-going Chapters) the greatness of your guilt and danger in so doing. What degenerate Wretches have you been to strike in with the avowed Enemy of your Father's House, and so stain the Honour and Glory of it? How often is it mention'd in Scripture as a mighty aggravation of Mens sins, that they forsook the God of their Fathers? And this thou hast done. Is not the Voice of Reason as well as Scripture, *Thy own Friend,*

Friend, and thy Father's Friend forsake thou not? Prov. 27. 10. God took you into his Family before you were capable of doing him any Service; and since you have been capable of it, you have rebelled against him that was your God from your Mother's Womb, and that sustain'd you in the Arms of his merciful Providence when you hung upon your Mother's Breasts. Be astonisht O Heavens, and tremble O Earth! the Lord hath nourisht and brought up Children, and they have lifted up their Heels against him. You have been as a Beast before him; yea more brutish than any of them. For the Ox knows his Owner, and the Ass is not so dull but he knows his Master's Crib. What Iniquity have you found in the God of your Fathers? Testifie against him if you are able. Hath he been a dry Land or a barren Wilderness to you? For which of his good Works have you dealt thus with him? And for what? For the sake of lying and destructive Vanities, of which you have cause to be ashamed, and dread what the issue of them may be. Know thou that for all these things God will speedily bring thee to Judgment. And do but suppose him speaking to you in some such words as these.

'You are the Seed of my ancient Friends; and you 'should have favour'd of the Stock whence you sprang. 'For your Father's sake I gave you many of the Bles-'sings of my Left Hand; and I reached out my Right 'Hand too to embrace you; but you rudely put it by, 'and madly flung away from me: In your Infancy I 'entred into Covenant with you and sware to you: I 'took you into my House and set my Seal upon you. 'I gave you many helps which others never enjoy'd; 'and freed you from many hinderances that others were 'hamper'd withal. I well remember the Care, the 'Commands, the Prayers, the Tears, the Pains which 'yonder Parents of yours took about you; and I de-

'clare before all the World, that I take it kindly at
'their Hands. They did the duty of a Father and a
'Mother to you. And I was not wanting to you nei-
'ther. I begun, as you can't but remember, very
'early with you; I waited long upon you; I follow'd
'you Year after Year with Offers and Entreaties. I
'water'd you with the Dew of Heaven till I was quite
'weary of you; for you still proved dead Trees. I
'expected you should have been a Diadem and a
'Crown of Glory to me, a credit to Religion, an
'honour and a comfort to your Parents, and have pro-
'moted my Interest in the Earth. But on the contra-
'ry, you have been a blot and a reproach to me, a
'scandal to the Men of the World, a comfort to the
'Children of wicked Men, by shewing them there
'were some that could be viler than the vilest of them;
'a shame and a grief to the Souls of your Parents.
'You did eat out the Mark that I so early set upon
'you, that when your Fleeces were a little grown, it
'was not discernable; as tho' you design'd that my
'Servants when they sought you out might not know
'you, or so much as suspect that ever you belong'd to
'my Fold. I put you to feed in green Pastures, by
'the still Waters among my Sheep; and you were not
'stoln out of my Grounds, but you yourselves *run a-*
'stray, broke thro' my Enclosures, leapt over my Hedge,
'tho' you knew it was a very high and thorny one,
'and the Briers thereof did often run into your Flesh.
'And now therefore, O ye Angels, the Executioners
'of my Vengeance, bind these up in Bundles, for they
'are the Tares that grew in my Field among my good
'Corn, and throw them into unquenchable Flames.
'Of all Sinners, I am resolved these shall never see
'my Face.

Lord, what fear, what shame, what blushes, what confusion, what agonies of Mind, and horrors of Conscience

science will seize you when God shall thus speak to you out of the Whirl-wind of his Wrath, with a Voice lowder and more terrible than Thunder! There will be weeping and howling in that day among all the workers of Iniquity; but among none so great and so loud as among the Children of the Kingdom when they shall be thrust out, and plung'd into the fiery sulphurious Lake; when at the same time they that were Strangers, and in a double Sense took Heaven by violence, shall in their very sight, and before their Faces, enter into the Kingdom with *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*. What gnashing of Teeth will there be among you for madness *before* you sink into that doleful place, as well as for excessive torment *after* you are in it to see yourselves excluded and them admitted. Then shall the fullest Vials of Wrath be poured out on your Heads: And if you will not *now*, you shall *then*, lay to Heart such things as these throughout the vast and endless ages of Eternity, and your own Consciences and Thoughts shall be perpetually falling upon you like a fresh Milstone, or talent of Lead, dropt upon your Heads every Moment.

Oh that you were wise, and understood this before it be too late! Shew yourselves Men, and prevent all this by a present serious Consideration while things may be helpt. And if you would but take this first Step you would not need much perswasion to take the

II. *Viz.* Earnestly plead the Covenant of God with your Fathers for his pardoning and renewing Grace. Alas! It may be, some of you will say, God help us, this Advice comes too late to us. For we have many Years neglected the ratification of it since we have been at Age, and so the time is slip'd and elaps'd. Nay, which is yet worse, we have notoriously broken it; forfeited all our Interest in it, and can't rationally expect any benefit by it; but rather on the contrary, that

God should deal worse with us than with others that have been strangers to the Covenant and the Promises.

A very deep and serious Sense of this would do well. But be it so; This is an Argument indeed that you should plead this Covenant with a great deal of Humility and godly sorrow, but 'tis no Argument that you should not plead it at all. For if now at last you are but serious and in earnest, you have a gracious God to deal with, who is ready to renew his Covenant with you, and you may yet apply yourselves to him with a greater confidence than the Children of others can rationally do, under all your sinking fears on the account of the great guilt you have contracted, the great danger you have incurr'd, and the dismal wrath you have deserv'd. For after all, you have more to say for yourselves than the Children of Strangers have; for you may apply yourselves to him under such a Notion as they cannot, as *your Father's God*, as many have done under the like fears and distresses of Conscience, and found relief by it. God was just on the very point of rooting up the whole Nation of *Israel* at once; and of the two Arguments that *Moses* urges God withal to spare them, tho' a provoking People, this, as the strongest, is put last, *Remember Isaac and Israel thy Servants, from whom they are descended*, Exod. 32. 13. And this made his Repentings to kindle faster towards them, than ever his Anger did against them. What a prodigious Sinner was *Manasseh*? And yet when in his great Affliction he *besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, he was entreated of him*, 2 Chron. 23. 12.

You have played the Harlot, saith God to the *Jews*, *with many Lovers*, Jer. 3. 1. And tho' in that case Men would give an everlasting Bill of Divorce, *yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* And *v.* 4. *wilt thou not*

not from this time cry to me my Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will you not at last return unto me, who have been so early espoused to you, and stood in a Covenant-relation to your Ancestors when they were but a small handful of People, as the words *thy youth*, are explained elsewhere. And then you have the Answer which God himself, by way of Prophesie and Encouragement, frames for them, *Behold we come unto thee, the Lord our God. q. d.* We are the Posterity of thine ancient Servants, by Birth related to thee, and that encourages us to come to thee as the Lord our God, tho' we are unworthy to be called thy People. Special Mercies in a time of great discouragements are promised to them, *Isa.* 41. 8. *because ye are*, saith God, *the seed of Abraham my Friend.* And when they were not only under sore distresses, but sad declinings too, they had *erred* from God's ways, and their Hearts were *hardened* from his Fear; they plead this Argument with God for seasonable Relief, *We are thine; thou never bearest Rule over them, they were not called by thy Name*, Isa. 63. 19. *Ezek.* 16. 32.

Take therefore to yourselves words, and say, 'Lord wilt thou not show special favour to us, seeing 'thou hast been an ancient Friend to, and Confederate with our Family? Why, this is an Argument 'that is wont to prevail upon *Men*, even those that 'are ill-natur'd, whose Bowels are but Flints and A'damants in comparison of thy tender Compassions. 'And 'tis a *vertuous* Disposition, a thing commenda'ble and praise-worthy in the Judgment of all: And 'as such 'tis recorded in thy Book in sundry Instan'ces. 'Tis so of *David*, 2 Sam 9. 3, 7. *That he enquired whither there were any of the house of* Saul *yet alive, that he might shew the kindness of God to him*, 'and he shewed very considerable respect to *Mephibo-*

'*Sheth* for *Jonathan* his *Father's* sake, because of the 'strict league of Friendship that had been between 'them. *Asa* prevailed on *Benhadad*, tho' a very wick-'ed and selfish Man, to joyn with him in his distress, 'because there hath been, said he, *a League between thy Father and my Father.* 'And 'tis mention'd as a 'Reproach to *Joash*, that *he remembred not the kind-ness that Jehoiada the Father had done, but slew his Son.* 2 Chron. 24. 22. 'And shall the same thing be 'charg'd on thee? Far be this from thee, O Lord. 'True, indeed, I have neglected thy Covenant, and 'sadly broken it. But yet thou hast said to the Chil-'dren of the Covenant, *Return ye backsliding Children. Behold, I return unto thee, heal all my backslidings, for thou art the Lord my God; my God from my Mother's Belly: Save me for I am the Son of thine Hand-maid,* 'And if thou art ashamed to be known by the Name 'of MY God; yet, O Lord God of my FATHERS 'and thy *Friends*, look upon me, and be *gracious* un-'to me, as thou usest to be to the returning Posterity 'of them that loved and feared *thy* Name.

III. Plead your *Holy Baptism*, and the many Promi-ses of God to the Children of holy Men.

'Lord, my Parents have solemnly dedicated me 'to thee in my Infancy. See whose Character and 'Superscription it is that I bear upon me. O help a 'poor Creature that is willing *to render unto God the 'things that are Gods.* Save me, for I am thine, and 'let not one of thy own perish eternally for want of 'thy help. For hast thou not said, *I will be a God to my People and their Seed?* That thou wilt *Circumcise their Heart, and the Heart of their Seed after them?* That thou wilt *pour out thy Blessing on their Off-spring?* 'True indeed, these are but general indefinite Promi-'ses. I cant say thou hadst a special Eye upon me in 'particular, infallibly to make all this good to me.

But

'But then on the other hand, I can't say the contra-
'ry. Nay, I have good hopes thro' Grace, that I
'was particularly intended by thee, because thou hast
'put it into the Heart of thy Servant to pray this
'Prayer before thee this day. Thou usest to be found
'of those that seek thee. They that hunger and thirst
'after spiritual good things, are not wont to be sent
'empty away, but to be liberally filled. O let my
'Fleece also be wet with the Dew of Heaven. If thou
'hast no regard to me *a dead Dog*, yet have some
'respect to that word of thine wherein thou hast made
'me to hope. Let Heaven say *Amen* to the Requests,
'which if I know myself, in the sincerity of my own
'Heart, I offer up here on Earth.

IV. Add hereunto a personal solemn Dedication, and surrender of yourselves to God as his Covenant-Servants with your whole Heart and Soul. Nothing of reason can be urged against this; a great deal of reason may be urged for it. Being now come to years of understanding, you are capable of such a Transaction. Your Parents dedication of you will pass for nothing, if you don't ratifie and confirm it by your own Act and Deed. God by these Papers at this time puts in his claim to you. If you don't comply, he may take it for a flat denial. Have you not manifestly broken Covenant with him; and is it not high time to renew it? How express, punctual, and serious are you in all your Contracts with Men in Matters of an infinitely lower nature and concern? And why should you not be the same when you are to transact with the great God, and give up yourselves Body and Soul to be his for ever? Such a Covenanting with God would strike a mighty awe into your Breasts; fix your volatile Spirits; leave a grateful relish and savour on your Souls; comfort you under fears, help to clear up your doubts; check you when you begin

to

to wander; recover you when you are fallen, if reflected on; quicken you to the discharge of your duty; fortifie you against Temptations; the making and the keeping of it will be life to you in the hour of death. When a Man is brought to this in sincerity, this is saving Conversion; and somewhat of this will follow upon that great Change. If there be indeed any thing of the renewing Grace of God within you, that will naturally incline you to it, and there will not need much perswasion. The divine Flame in any Soul will of itself point upward, and its natural tendency is toward that Heaven from whence it came. O that the Divine Spirit would breathe upon you; then would you readily say, 'Lord, I here return to thee 'a poor wandring Creature, even my own Soul: I 'restore to thee that which I have robbed thee of. 'Now in the Name of thy Son, and by the Spirit of 'thy Grace, I yield up myself to thee, to be thine, to 'be ruled as well as to be saved by thee.

V. Lastly, having done all this, joyn yourselves as Members to some particular Church of Christ or other. For the better edification of his Body, our Saviour hath appointed the erecting of particular *Churches*: And wherever a sufficient number of persons were called, it was the constant practice of the primitive times to unite in such Societies as stated Members of them, under the guidance and conduct of those Pastors and Teachers, which with their own consent, the Holy Ghost had set over them to rule and feed them. This is a Constitution of Christ which is directly thwarted and opposed by a Generation of loose and rambling Christians, that content themselves with bare *Hearing*, and that too in a very odd way. For they are a sort of volatile Auditors, perpetually frisking too and fro, and can fix no where. Were all Men of this humour, there could be no such thing as particular Churches, which

which Christ hath appointed for the edifying of his Members. And how they can rationally expect to flourish either in Grace or Peace, while they live in a direct opposition to a manifest Institution of our Lord Jesus, which was not more an effect of his Authority than of his Wisdom and Goodness, I wish Men would seriously consider. Are any of you so self-sufficient, that you need no Pastor, nor the assistance of your fellow Christians to watch over, admonish, rebuke, exhort, comfort, strengthen, and counsel you? Are there none of the Churches of Christ that are *pure enough?* None of them that have *latitude*, or *strictness* enough for you? None of them worthy enough for you to joyn yourselves unto? When our Lord hath given such variety of Gifts to his Ministers, is there none of them whose Abilities suit you, and please your curious Palates, that by settling under them you may be edified? I may say to such Persons as *Constantine* once did to such a self-conceited Man, *Take a Ladder, and climb up to Heaven by thyself alone.* In short, a Society of Believers walking together in Gospel Order, is like the excellent composure of Syllables, Words, and Sentences, that have a great deal of Sense and Signification in them. But a separated and divided Christian, that will join himself to no Church, is like a *single* Letter, or a *disjoynted* Syllable that is perfect Nonsense.

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